

Asa Hutchinson

William Asa Hutchinson II (born December 3, 1950) is an American businessman, attorney, and politician, serving since 2015 as the 46th governor of Arkansas. Previously he was U.S. Attorney for the Fort Smith-based Western District of Arkansas, U.S. Congressman from the Third District of Arkansas, Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the first Undersecretary for Border & Transportation Security at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

In 2006, Hutchinson was the Republican nominee for governor of Arkansas, but was defeated by Democratic nominee Mike Beebe, the outgoing state attorney general. In 2014, Hutchinson was again the Republican nominee for governor, this time winning the election by defeating Democratic U.S. Representative Mike Ross. He was reelected in 2018 with nearly two-thirds of the vote.

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Asa Hutchinson



46th Governor of Arkansas

Incumbent

Assumed office
January 13, 2015

Lieutenant Tim Griffin

Preceded by Mike Beebe

Vice Chair of the National Governors Association

Incumbent

Assumed office
August 5, 2020

Chair Andrew Cuomo

Preceded by Andrew Cuomo

Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Border and Transportation Security

In office

January 23, 2003 – March 1, 2005

President George W. Bush

Preceded by Position established

Succeeded by Randy Beardsworth

Early life and legal career

Hutchinson was born in Bentonville, Arkansas, the son of Coral Virginia (Mount) Hutchinson (1912–1998) and John Malcolm Hutchinson Sr. (1907–1991).^[2] He earned his bachelor's degree from Bob Jones University in South Carolina in 1972, and received his J.D. from the University of Arkansas School of Law in 1975. He practiced law in Fort Smith for 21 years and handled more than 100 jury trials.

In 1982, Hutchinson was appointed by President Ronald Reagan as U.S. Attorney for the United States Western District of Arkansas. At the age of thirty-one, Hutchinson was the youngest U.S. Attorney in the nation. He made national headlines after successfully prosecuting The Covenant, The Sword, and The Arm of the Lord (CSA), a white supremacist organization founded by polygamist James Ellison. The CSA forced a three-day armed stand-off with local, state and federal law enforcement. As U.S. Attorney, Hutchinson put on a flak jacket and personally negotiated a peaceful conclusion to the stand-off.^[3]

During his tenure as U.S. Attorney, Hutchinson was described as aggressive in his efforts to prosecute criminals. Hutchinson would later be appointed to run the DEA.

Business career

In early 2005, Hutchinson founded a consulting firm, Hutchinson Group, LLC, with partners Betty Guhman and Kirk Tompkins, in Little Rock, and accepted a contract for a one-year position with Venable LLP in Washington, D.C., as the chair of its Homeland Security practice. Hutchinson ended his contract with Venable LLP in March 2006 to focus on his gubernatorial campaign and his consulting firm in Little Rock. In January 2007, Hutchinson rejoined Venable.^[4]

In June 2006, the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* reported that Hutchinson's \$2,800 investment in Fortress America Acquisition Corporation, a company that Hutchinson was advising, was worth over a million dollars after the company's initial public offering. The news story noted that Hutchinson was unable to touch his stock for another two years. The six founding shareholders in Fortress America, in addition to Hutchinson, included former U.S. Representative Tom McMillen of Maryland, former U.S. Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma, and a private-equity firm that had former CIA Director James Woolsey among its partners.

Two months earlier, on May 4, 2006, Hutchinson had filed a financial disclosure form, which he was required to submit as candidate for governor. The form did not list his 200,000 shares in

(acting) ^[1]	
Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration	
In office	
August 8, 2001 – January 23, 2003	
President	George W. Bush
Preceded by	William Simpkins (acting)
Succeeded by	Karen Tandy
Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Arkansas's 3rd district	
In office	
January 3, 1997 – August 6, 2001	
Preceded by	Tim Hutchinson
Succeeded by	John Boozman
Chair of the Republican Party of Arkansas	
In office	
January 1, 1990 – January 1, 1995	
Preceded by	Ken Coon
Succeeded by	Sheffield Nelson
United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas	
In office	
September 1, 1982 – January 20, 1985	
President	Ronald Reagan
Preceded by	Larry McCord
Succeeded by	Michael Fitzhugh
City Attorney of Bentonville, Arkansas	
In office	
1977–1978	
Personal details	
Born	William Asa Hutchinson II <div>December 3, 1950</div> <div><u>Bentonville, Arkansas, U.S.</u></div>
Political party	Republican
Spouse(s)	Susan Hutchinson
Children	4

Fortress America, which were trading at about \$5 per share. "Just totally an oversight," Hutchinson said when questioned by the media in June.^[5] He filed an amended report the next day to correct the error.^[6]

Residence	<u>Governor's Mansion</u>
Education	<u>Bob Jones University (BA)</u> <u>University of Arkansas (JD)</u>

Political career

Early efforts

In 1986, Hutchinson ran against incumbent Democratic Senator (and former governor) Dale Bumpers.^[7] It was a nationally Democratic year, and Hutchinson fared worse than Bumpers' previous Senate challenger, Little Rock investment banker William P. "Bill" Clark, in the 1980 election.

In 1990, Hutchinson ran against Winston Bryant for Attorney General of Arkansas; he again lost, although the race was very tight.

After losing the 1990 race, Hutchinson became the co-chairman, with Sheffield Nelson, of the Arkansas Republican Party, a position he held for five years. During that period, Hutchinson was credited with helping dramatically build the GOP organization in Arkansas by leading the effort to require the state to finance polling stations, which allowed more Republican voters to get to the polls and vote.

Hutchinson considered a rematch with Bumpers in 1992 before he deferred to Mike Huckabee, who lost to Bumpers.

U.S. House of Representatives

In 1992 Hutchinson's brother, Tim, was elected to Congress in Arkansas' Third District, when veteran Republican U.S. Representative John Paul Hammerschmidt retired. In 1996, when his brother decided not to run for re-election to the House in order to seek the open Senate seat caused by the retirement of Democrat David Pryor, Hutchinson ran for the seat and won.

Hutchinson, who had at first decided to run for an open seat in the Arkansas House of Representatives from Sebastian County, defeated Ann Henry, a long-time friend of Bill and Hillary Clinton, in November 1996. Although Henry outspent Hutchinson during the campaign, the district's heavy Republican tilt and his brother Tim's presence atop the ballot helped Asa win with 55 percent of the vote—to date, the last remotely competitive race in the Third District. His brother Tim also won his campaign for Senate, and served for one term, losing his re-election bid in 2002.



Asa Hutchinson's 105th congressional photo

In 1998, Hutchinson was re-elected to the House with far less difficulty, taking 80 percent of the vote against an underfunded Democratic challenger. He was re-elected unopposed in November 2000.

In office, Hutchinson compiled a voting record as conservative as that of his brother. He led efforts to crack down on illegal drugs, particularly methamphetamine. Hutchinson also served as one of the managers (prosecutors) during the impeachment trial of President Bill Clinton in 1998. In 1999, Hutchinson was involved in the effort to reform campaign finance laws and offered an alternative

proposal to the bill by Christopher Shays and Marty Meehan, which he opposed on the grounds that it "went too far" because it attempted to ban television commercials by legal third-party organizations. Hutchinson did support the bill by John McCain and Russ Feingold in the Senate.^[8]

Hutchinson attempted, unsuccessfully, to modify the civil asset forfeiture reform bill that sought to prevent police abuse of its power to seize private property on mere suspicion of being linked to any criminal investigation. His amendment, allegedly, would have empowered the police to continue profiting from drug money.^[9]

Drug Enforcement Administration

In 2001, at the beginning of the George W. Bush administration, Hutchinson was appointed Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). *The Washington Post* columnist David Broder praised Hutchinson's appointment, writing: "The high esteem in which former Rep. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas is held by his colleagues was demonstrated by the 98–1 Senate vote confirming him last month as the new director of the Drug Enforcement Administration. Even more telling was the fact that Rep. John Conyers of Michigan, the senior Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee and an ardent opponent of the impeachment of President Clinton, appeared at the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing to praise Hutchinson, who had been one of the Republican House managers presenting the case against Clinton to the full Senate. In his 4 1/2 years in the House, Hutchinson, a former U.S. Attorney, earned an estimable reputation as a thoughtful conservative and, as liberals like Conyers and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy of Vermont affirmed, as a fair-minded advocate."^[10]

During his tenure at the DEA, Hutchinson led a re-evaluation of the DEA's mission and resources, concluding that too many resources were focused on 1980s-era drug enforcement priorities. Hutchinson called greater attention to newly emergent drug threats such as methamphetamine in rural America, ecstasy among youth, and predatory drugs (also known as date rape drugs). He also lobbied for greater investments in prevention and treatment. He particularly focused on using drug treatment courts as a way to help non-violent drug offenders beat addiction.

The official position of the DEA during Hutchinson's two-year tenure was opposition to medical marijuana, and the DEA raided numerous medical marijuana establishments during that time. But in 2011 Hutchinson supported the right to use medical marijuana in a debate at the University of Arkansas when he said "I think that if there is a medical need and the doctors say you need a particular substance — whether it is Marinol or marijuana or whatever — if the doctor or medical community says that, then patients ought to be able to get that."^[11]

Department of Homeland Security



Hutchinson as Undersecretary for Border and Transportation Security



Hutchinson and United States Congressman Frank Wolf tour a DEA drug testing facility in Northern Virginia in 2001

After the September 11 attacks, Congress created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). President George W. Bush tapped Hutchinson to lead the Border and Transportation Security Directorate, the largest division of the DHS, with more than 110,000 employees. Hutchinson was confirmed by unanimous consent by the Senate on January 23, 2003. Later, during his campaign for Governor of Arkansas, Hutchinson's opponent attempted to portray him as mishandling immigration issues. Hutchinson's critics particularly focused on his efforts to limit the Border Patrol to stopping illegal immigrants from crossing the border, while giving Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents sole responsibility for removing aliens already in the country.

While serving as Undersecretary for Border and Transportation Security in the Bush Administration, Hutchinson supported Bush's proposals to provide more job opportunities for illegal aliens without criminal records, while tightening security on the border. In September 2004, he said: "Eliminating the fear of deportation will be an incentive." In his written response to Senate questions, Hutchinson also said "Undocumented aliens will tell you they often have trouble sleeping at night, and leaving for work each day, not knowing if they will make it home at the end of the day." Hutchinson also said that Americans are not willing to put in the resources that would be required to remove the estimated 12 million or more population of illegal immigrants.^[12] In that same testimony, Hutchinson emphasized that any debate over immigration reform must start first with enforcement of immigration laws and border security, asserting, "You have to start with the proposition that in order to be effective in the war against terrorism our nation must be able to secure its borders."^[13]

Hutchinson was also careful to temper his support for Bush's Temporary Worker Proposal with a call for strengthening security first. In his testimony, he asserted:

The necessary elements to tackle this enormous problem [of illegal immigration] effectively are: (1) Increasing the funding of technology and security personnel along the border, (2) Making it more difficult for illegal aliens to get jobs in this country, and (3) providing a workable and practical means for migrant workers to meet the job needs in this country when those jobs cannot be filled otherwise. When, and only when, these security measures are established then it is appropriate to begin a conversation on providing a temporary legal status to the eight million illegal workers already in this country. It is a significant security vulnerability to allow such a large population live and work anonymously in our communities, with no legal identities or other common connections to society. It is, in fact, a terrorist's dream. Moreover, any legal status should be a temporary work permit with a point of return to the alien's home country."^[13]

Hutchinson left office as Undersecretary on March 1, 2005.^[14]

Private Organization Task Forces

The Constitution Project's Guantanamo Task Force

Hutchinson agreed to serve on The Constitution Project's Guantanamo Task Force in December 2010.^{[15][16][17]} He told the Associated Press he agreed to join the task force because he believed it was "something important for our national security and our war on terrorism."

NRA "National School Shield Initiative" Task Force

In the wake of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the National Rifle Association (NRA) assembled a task force of experts in homeland security, law enforcement training, and school safety to review school security standards in select areas of the country. The stated goal of the task force was to come up with a comprehensive plan to address the safety of children in schools and to prevent such shootings in the future. Hutchinson served as the leader of the task force.

On April 2, 2013, Hutchinson presented the National School Shield plan during a news conference at the National Press Club.^{[18][19]}

On that same day, he appeared on MSNBC's *The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell* to discuss the National School Shield plan.^[20]

Governor of Arkansas

2006 election

Shortly after his return to Arkansas, Hutchinson announced his intention to run for governor in 2006. Initially, Hutchinson was to face three-term Lieutenant Governor Winthrop Paul Rockefeller, who was favored in most pre-election polls, in the Republican primary. However, Rockefeller's withdrawal and death from a blood disorder in early 2006 led to Hutchinson winning the primary. He was defeated in the general election by the Democratic candidate, then-Arkansas Attorney General Mike Beebe.



Hutchinson campaigning for governor in 2006

2014 election

Hutchinson was a Republican candidate for governor of Arkansas in 2014. He was supported by House Speaker Davy Carter.^[21] On November 4, 2014, he defeated Democratic gubernatorial nominee Mike Ross in the general election.

2018 election

Hutchinson won re-election on November 6, 2018.

Tenure

Hutchinson assumed office as governor on January 13, 2015.

On November 16, 2015, the governor said that he would block all Syrian refugees from entering the state in response to the November 2015 Paris attacks.^[22]

Meeting with stays from the court system, Hutchinson approved a condensed schedule for the execution of eight men in eleven days because the expiration date of his state's supply of one of the drugs used in Arkansas's lethal cocktail, midazolam, was the end of April 2017. Arkansas had not executed any prisoners since 2005.^[23]

As Governor, Hutchinson implemented work requirements for Medicaid enrollees. As a result, by December 2018, almost 17,000 Arkansans had lost their Medicaid health insurance, with reapplication available in the new calendar year.^[24]

In February 2019, Hutchinson signed a bill into law that would criminalize abortion in the event *Roe v. Wade* is overturned.^[25]

Family

Asa Hutchinson's older brother, Tim, preceded him as U.S. Representative from Arkansas's 3rd congressional district and served one term as a United States Senator from Arkansas from 1997–2003, being defeated for a second term by then-Arkansas Attorney General Mark Pryor, a Democrat, in 2002. Asa and Tim Hutchinson are both graduates of Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina with Asa, Class of 1972. His identical twin nephews, Jeremy and Timothy Chad Hutchinson, sons of Tim Hutchinson, were the first twins to serve alongside each other in the Arkansas General Assembly, both as members of the House of Representatives. Hutchinson is the brother-in-law of former Arkansas state Senator Kim Hendren who in 1958 married Hutchinson's sister, Marylea Hutchinson. Arkansas District 2 State Senator Jim Hendren of Sulphur Springs is Hutchinson's nephew.^[26] Asa Hutchinson's son, Asa Hutchinson III has been arrested multiple times for driving offenses to include arrests in 2019, 2018 and 2016 for DWI and an arrest for possession of a controlled substance at a music festival in 2016.^[27]



Hutchinson greeting Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue in 2017



Hutchinson meeting with President Donald Trump and Laura Kelly in 2020

Electoral history

Arkansas gubernatorial election, 2006 ^[28]					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Mike Beebe</u>	430,765	55.61%	+8.65%
	<u>Republican</u>	Asa Hutchinson	315,040	40.67%	-12.35%
	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Rod Bryan</u>	15,767	2.04%	
	<u>Green</u>	<u>Jim Lendall</u>	12,774	1.65%	
	Write-ins		334	0.04%	
Majority			115,725	14.94%	+8.88%
Turnout			774,680		
	<u>Democratic gain</u> from <u>Republican</u>		Swing		

2014 Arkansas Republican gubernatorial primary results ^[29]				
Party		Candidate	Votes	%
	<u>Republican</u>	Asa Hutchinson	130,752	72.95
	<u>Republican</u>	Curtis Coleman	48,473	27.05
Total votes			179,225	100

2014 Arkansas gubernatorial election ^[30]					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
	<u>Republican</u>	Asa Hutchinson	470,429	55.44%	+21.81%
	<u>Democratic</u>	Mike Ross	352,115	41.49%	-22.93%
	<u>Libertarian</u>	Frank Gilbert	16,319	1.92%	N/A
	<u>Green</u>	Josh Drake	9,729	1.15%	-0.71%
Total votes			'848,592'	'100.0%'	N/A
	<u>Republican</u> gain from <u>Democratic</u>				

2018 Arkansas Republican gubernatorial primary results				
Party		Candidate	Votes	%
	<u>Republican</u>	Asa Hutchinson (incumbent)	145,251	69.7
	<u>Republican</u>	Jan Morgan	63,009	30.3
Total votes			208,260	100.0

2018 Arkansas gubernatorial election					
Party		Candidate	Votes	%	±
	<u>Republican</u>	Asa Hutchinson (incumbent)	582,406	65.33%	+9.89%
	<u>Democratic</u>	Jared Henderson	283,218	31.77%	-9.72%
	<u>Libertarian</u>	Mark West	25,885	2.90%	+0.98%
Total votes			'891,509'	'100.0%'	N/A
	<u>Republican</u> hold				

See also

- 2020 coronavirus pandemic in Arkansas

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External links

- [Governor Asa Hutchinson \(https://governor.arkansas.gov/\)](https://governor.arkansas.gov/) official government site
- [Asa Hutchinson \(https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/Arkansas/Government/Federal/US_House_of_Representatives/Former_Members/Asa_Hutchinson\)](https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/Arkansas/Government/Federal/US_House_of_Representatives/Former_Members/Asa_Hutchinson) at [Curlie](#)
- [Appearances \(https://www.c-span.org/person/?asahutchinson02\)](https://www.c-span.org/person/?asahutchinson02) on [C-SPAN](#)
- [Biography \(http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H001014\)](http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H001014) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Party political offices		
Preceded by <u>Bill Clark</u>	<u>Republican nominee for U.S. Senator from Arkansas (Class 3)</u> 1986	Succeeded by <u>Mike Huckabee</u>
Preceded by <u>Mike Huckabee</u>	<u>Republican nominee for Governor of Arkansas</u> 2006	Succeeded by <u>Jim Keet</u>
Preceded by <u>Jim Keet</u>	<u>Republican nominee for Governor of Arkansas</u> 2014, 2018	Most recent
U.S. House of Representatives		
Preceded by <u>Tim Hutchinson</u>	<u>Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Arkansas's 3rd congressional district</u> 1997–2001	Succeeded by <u>John Boozman</u>
Political offices		
Preceded by <u>William Simpkins</u> Acting	<u>Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration</u> 2001–2003	Succeeded by <u>Karen Tandy</u>
Preceded by <u>Mike Beebe</u>	<u>Governor of Arkansas</u> 2015–present	Incumbent
U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)		
Preceded by <u>Mike Pence</u> <i>as <u>Vice President</u></i>	<u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u> Within Arkansas	Succeeded by <u>Mayor of city</u> in which event is held
		Succeeded by <u>Otherwise Nancy Pelosi</u> <i>as <u>Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives</u></i>
Preceded by <u>Mike Parson</u> <i>as <u>Governor of Missouri</u></i>	<u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u> Outside Arkansas	Succeeded by <u>Gretchen Whitmer</u> <i>as <u>Governor of Michigan</u></i>

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